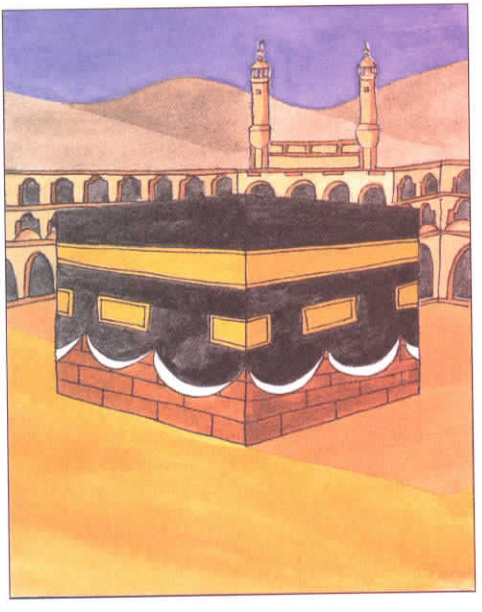
The Fire that Saved

The Story of Prophet Abraham
(Peace be upon him)



UK ISLAMIC ACADEMY

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Foreword

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

The Fire That Saved is one of a series of stories on the lives of the great Prophets, upon whom be peace, intended for children of 8 to 12 years. From the moment God created the world He started to reveal His guidance for mankind through His Prophets. These books relate the Prophets' experiences as they struggled to persuade the erring peoples of their day to obey and worship the one and only God. Much that is of relevance today can be learnt from the way these men, specially chosen by God for their task, taught, guided and trained the miscreants.

The Fire That Saved, in the English language, has been written for Muslim children growing up in an English-speaking country. This Prophet has been given the name he is known by, in English rather than his original Arabic name to avoid confusion. Parents and teachers, however, should ensure that the traditional Qur'anic name is also known.

Children living in a non-Muslim society are often denied their traditional Islamic family background where stories from the Holy Qur'an were frequently heard. Parents and teachers have a duty to make up for the shortcomings of living outside an Islamic environment. *The Fire That Saved* is intended to help them in their task by strengthening children's awareness of the guidance provided by God's Prophets who all bore the same message for mankind: that there is no god but the One, True God.

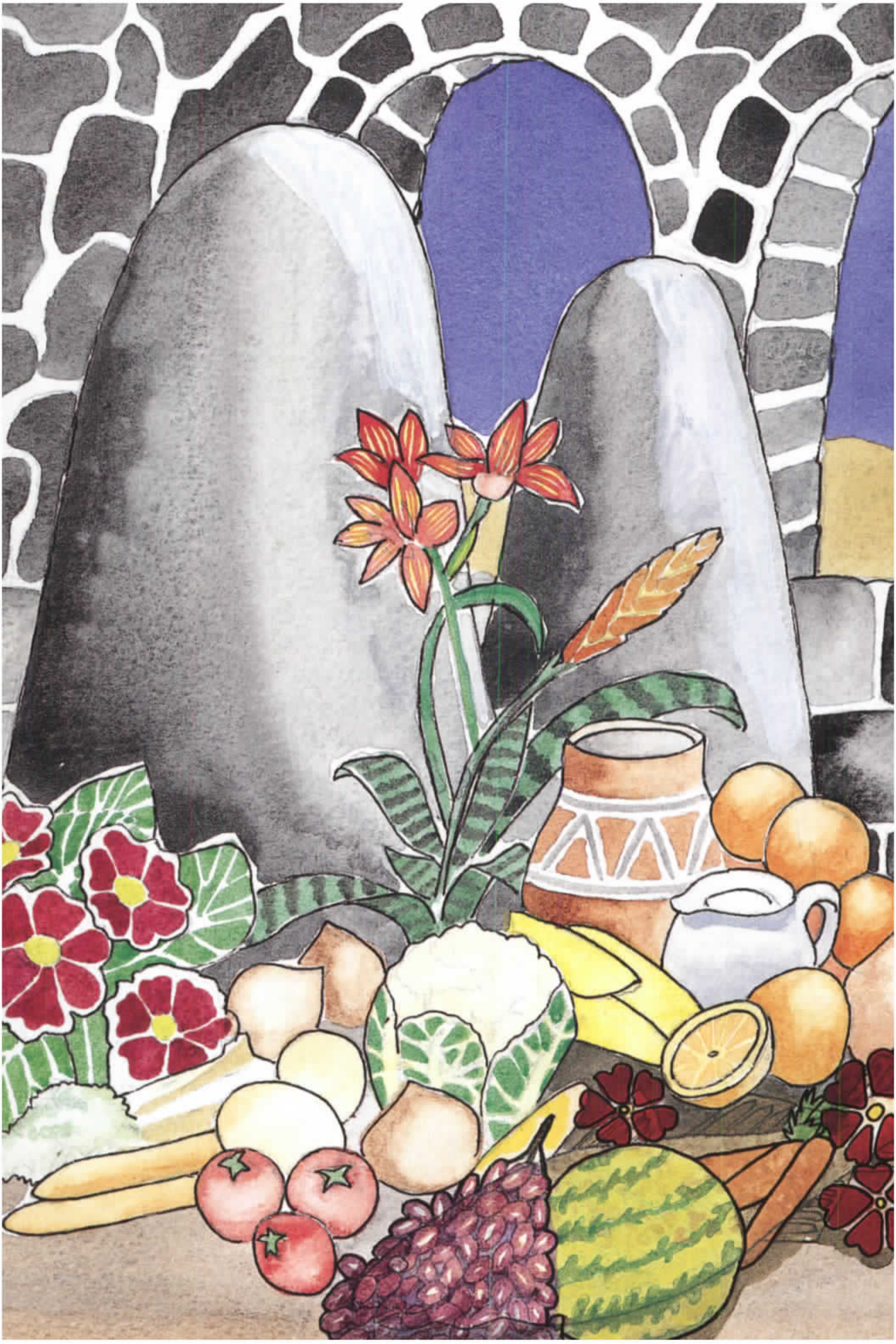
My thanks are due to Bro. Jamil Qureshi, Sis. Maryam Davies, my daughter Shifa' and my other children for their help in producing this book. May God bless them all and accept this humble effort and make it beneficial to all.

Iqbal Ahmad Azami

1
A person not like the rest

Long, long ago there was a city ruled by a proud and cruel king. In this city, the people had idols. The idols were only things made of stone, but the people believed the idols were gods. Because they were afraid of these idols, the people bowed down before them. Because they were afraid of the king, the people bowed down before him too.

The people put all the idols together in a great building in the middle of the city. They put the best food and drink next to the idols. Then, they prayed to the idols and asked them for favours. On a special festival-day, all the people went out of the city, into one of the king's parks, and ate and drank a lot and enjoyed themselves. When they had finished, they came back and went inside the big building to bow down to the stone idols. One man was very well-known in this city because his job was selling idols. His name was Azar. Azar always went with the people and did what they did, so they liked him. He sold the idols, but even so he was afraid of them, and so he bowed down to them, and prayed to them, and asked them for favours. All the people in the city did these things, all except one. Just one person in the whole city was different.



This person was Azar's son, Abraham, (Ibrahim), (peace and blessings be upon him).*

*Muslims are required to invoke Allah's blessings and peace upon the Prophets whenever their names are mentioned.

2
A strong mind, a clear heart

Abraham was only a very young man, but he had a strong mind and a clear heart. He liked to think, and he liked to understand. So he asked questions. At first he put his questions to himself.

He saw how the people bowed down to the stone idols. Abraham asked: 'Why do they keep doing that? How can they be afraid of stones?'

He saw how the people spoke to the idols, and he saw that the idols never spoke back. Abraham asked: 'Why do they keep doing that? Don't they know that stones can't hear and stones can't speak?'

He saw that the people put the best food and drink next to the idols, and he saw that the idols never touched the food or drink. Abraham asked: 'Why do they keep doing that? Don't they know that stones can't eat or drink?'

He saw that the people came up close to the idols and asked in whispers for the idols to help them. Abraham saw that flies sat on the idols and buzzed all round them, but the idols could do nothing about it. He saw that mice came right up to the idols and sneaked away with the food left for the idols, and the idols could do

nothing to stop them. So Abraham asked: 'Why do the people ask these stones for favours? Don't they know stones can't help or hurt anything?'

3
Abraham is told not to ask questions

Abraham did not want to be rude, and he did not want to be a trouble-maker. But there was a great need in his mind and a great need in his heart. He just had to know and feel the truth, so he decided he must ask his father. He went to Azar and asked him straight out:

'Father, why do you bow down to stones? Why are you afraid of them?

'Father, why do you ask for favours from stones which can't hear you or answer you?

'Father, why do you put food and drink next to stones which can't eat or drink?'

Azar was shocked. He did not know what to do. He did not know what to say. He did not know what to think or how to answer Abraham's questions. So he became angry instead. He shouted at Abraham, and told him he had better do what all the other people in the city did. He told him he had better not ask such questions.

Abraham was sad because Azar did not understand at all the great need in his heart. Now Abraham wanted very much to make Azar understand, and he wanted

to make all the people in the city understand. So he went to others in the city with his questions. But nobody could think of any answers: just like Azar, they became angry instead and shouted at him.

But Abraham did not give up. He had to make them understand. How could he do it? He decided on a plan.

4
Abraham smashes the idols

When the special festival-day came round, the people were excited and happy. They all left the city as usual. Azar said to Abraham: 'Well, aren't you coming?' But Abraham said: 'No. I'm not well. It's not right for me to go.' So Azar and the others all left.

When Abraham was sure he was alone, he took hold of a strong axe and went to the big building where all the stone idols were kept. He went up to the idols and said in a firm voice:

'Now is your chance. Show me you can hear. Show me you can speak.'

But nothing happened. Then Abraham said:

'Just look at these fine plates of food. Show me you can eat.'

But nothing happened. Then Abraham said:

'Just look at these fine jugs of drink. Show me you can drink.'

But nothing happened. So Abraham went up to the nearest idol. He lifted the axe to his waist and swung it. The stone smashed to pieces. He waited.

But nothing happened. So Abraham went up to the next idol, bigger than the first. He lifted the axe to his

chest and swung it. The stone smashed to pieces. He waited.

But nothing happened. So Abraham went up to the next idol, bigger than the second. This time he lifted the axe up to his shoulders and swung it. The stone smashed to pieces. He waited.

But still nothing happened. So Abraham went up to the next idol, and the next, and the next, and smashed them all to pieces. Each time he waited, and each time nothing happened.

There were only two idols left, one a bit smaller than the other. Abraham went up to it, lifted the axe high above his head and swung it. Smash! And a second time. Smash! And a third time. Smash! Finally, this stone too was broken into many pieces.

Abraham waited. He got his breath back. Then he went up to the biggest idol of them all. He lifted the axe high above his head and swung it round once. He lifted the axe a second time and swung it round again. Then with all his strength, he lifted the axe a third time and swung it round again.

Just as the axe was about to smash the stone to pieces, he let go of it. So the axe just balanced on the body of the stone idol. Abraham smiled wisely to himself. Then he turned and went out of the big building and hurried home.

5
Abraham teaches his angry people a lesson

The people came back from their festival and went inside the big building to bow down to their idols, as they always did. They were shocked by what they saw. Some of them shouted. Some of them screamed. Some of them wept. Some of them even fainted. Then they became angry:

'Who has done this to our gods?'

Now Azar had a good idea who had done it but he kept quiet. But then somebody said: 'We've all heard the talk of that young man, Abraham. Where is he?' Then all the people started shouting angrily: *'Where is Abraham?'*

Abraham was brought to the big building. All the people stood round him, pointing at him and shouting, and getting angrier and angrier: 'You are the one who did this to our gods, aren't you? Yes, *You! You! You! You!'*

But Abraham did not panic or shake with fear. He was not afraid at all. He looked calmly at the people, without moving a muscle, without saying a word. He was so still the people were afraid and, very slowly, they stopped their shouting until the whole building

was completely silent. When Abraham was sure that they were in a mood to listen and think, he slowly lifted his arm, turned a little and pointed. All the people turned their heads to see.

Abraham was pointing at the biggest idol, the only one not broken into pieces. Abraham said: 'Look there! Look there! Maybe that idol smashed the others. Why don't you ask them? If they can speak, surely they will tell you!'

Of course, the people knew the idols were made of stone; they knew because they had bought them; they knew that Azar had sold them. So they knew that idols cannot speak or hear. The biggest idol was made of stone too, so it could not speak or hear either. The people knew that stones cannot move by themselves. So the biggest idol could not have smashed up the others.

Abraham saw that the people had no answer. They were dumb, unable to speak, unable to move. They just stared at Abraham, helpless. Abraham wanted to help them understand and share the great need in his heart. He spoke gently:

'Don't you see now? How can you bow to stone idols who are themselves helpless? How can you pray to them or turn to them for help?'

Abraham waited hopefully. But the people had prayed to stones for so long their hearts had become hard. They could not understand. So Abraham turned and left the big building.

6
The fire that did not burn

The people did not know how to answer Abraham's questions. But they knew one thing. They knew who broke the idols. So some time later, they met together and talked about it:

'Abraham broke our idols to pieces. Abraham made fun of our gods.'

'Yes, Abraham made our gods look foolish. He made us look foolish too.'

'Yes, Abraham must be made to pay. Abraham must be burnt in a fire. That will please our gods.'

Very soon the cry spread all through the city. The people ran about shouting, louder and louder:

'Burn Abraham! Burn him! Burn him!'

A great fire was lit. They brought Abraham to the fire and let him watch the flames grow high and hot. But Abraham showed no fear. He was calm and unmoving. When the fire was hot enough and was hissing and crackling noisily, they threw Abraham into it.

But God spoke to the fire:

'Fire, be coolness for Abraham! Fire, be safety for Abraham!'



The fire obeyed. Higher and higher the flames whirled over Abraham. But they were as cool to him as the shade of palm-trees to a traveller in a desert. Hotter and hotter the flames burned and roared around Abraham. But they were as gentle to him as sweet rain blowing in the face of a thirsty man on a hot day. Redder and redder the wood burned and hissed and crackled. But the blazing embers were as soft to Abraham's feet as moist grass is soft to a man who has walked barefoot on miles of sharp stones.

The fire burned fiercely. But Abraham was not harmed. The fire was coolness for Abraham. The fire was safety for Abraham.

The people could not believe what they saw. They could not understand what they saw. Some were terrified and fell to the ground. Others hid their faces in their hands and moaned. But most just watched, dumb, unable to move, unable to think. They were just like stones.

Abraham walked out of the fire. He turned away from the people to be alone for a time.

7
Abraham seeks the One to praise

That night, the need in his heart pressed upon Abraham. He asked: 'What power saved me from the flames?' In the deep quiet of his heart, he asked: 'Who is my Lord?'

He looked up at the sky and saw a bright star. 'There! There is my Lord.' But the star's light paled and he could see it no more. No! thought Abraham. That is not my Lord.

He looked up at the sky and saw the shining moon. 'There! There is my Lord!' But the moon's light paled and he could see it no more. No! thought Abraham. That is not my Lord.

He looked up at the sky and saw the sun rising strong and bright on the new day. 'There! Greater than the moon. There is my Lord.' Then Abraham thought: But at night the sun will set again. No! That is not my Lord.

Now God helped Abraham. God answered the need in his heart. God gave Abraham understanding.

God is living always. God does not die.

God's light is bright always. God's light never pales.



God's strength is mighty always. God's strength never fails.

But stars are weaker than the moon and weaker than the night.

And the moon is weaker than the sun and weaker than the morning.

And the sun is weaker than the night and weaker than the passing clouds.

'The sun and the moon and the stars are not of any help,' said Abraham. 'God is my one true Lord. God is my one true Helper.'

8
Abraham praises God

When Abraham understood this, his heart was comforted. He felt at peace and he gave thanks to God. He cried out:

'God is living always. God does not die.

'God is my Lord and the Lord of the stars, and the Lord of the moon, and the Lord of the sun.

'God is my Lord and the Lord of the day, and the Lord of the night, and the Lord of all men, and of all the things there are in all the worlds there are.'

So God guided Abraham and made him wise. God made him a Prophet for his people and for all mankind. God gave Abraham the Truth and made him His close friend. Then God told Abraham to teach the people not to pray to idols but to pray to God instead.

9
Abraham preaches to his people

Abraham set to work. He called the people of the city to God. He asked them: 'What do you pray to?' They said: 'We pray to our idols.'

Abraham said: 'But do they ever hear you when you call to them? And do they ever help you or harm you?' As before the people had no answer. 'Then why, why do you do it?'

Some of the people there answered Abraham. They said: 'We do it because our fathers did it, and they did it because their fathers did it, and before them their fathers, and before them their fathers.'

Abraham told them: 'O people of this city, listen to me. I do not bow to idols. I do not pray to idols. I am the enemy of these idols. I bow to God alone, I pray to God alone. God alone is the Lord of all the worlds. I pray to Him who created me, and who guides me. I pray to Him who gives me food and drink. I pray to Him who heals me when I am ill. I pray to Him who satisfies me when I am in need.'

Abraham then told them: 'But idols do not create, and idols do not guide, anyone or anything. Idols do not give food or drink. When someone is ill, idols cannot make him well. Idols do not make anyone die and they do not bring anyone to life.'

10
Abraham is brought before the king

In time, the proud and cruel king of the city heard of Abraham and what he was trying to teach the people. Now the people bowed to the king because they were afraid of him. The king liked that. But Abraham bowed to God alone, and he was telling the people to fear God alone. The king did not like that. So he ordered his soldiers to bring Abraham to his palace.

The king stared angrily at Abraham. He made a sign to his soldiers and they pointed their spears at Abraham. But Abraham stood firm. He was not afraid of the king at all.

When the king stared angrily at someone, they were supposed to crumple up and fall to the ground in fear. So when the king saw that Abraham was so calm and still, he was worried inside. The king's pride was hurt. But he did not want to show it:

'You!' he shouted at Abraham. 'Tell me! Who is your lord?'

Abraham spoke calmly and firmly: 'My Lord is God.'

The king became even angrier. His pride was hurt even more but he tried not to show it: 'And who is God?'

Abraham said: 'God is the One who gives life and death.'

At this, the king's face twitched. What Abraham said hit the king as hard as when Abraham hit the idols and smashed them to pieces. So the king paced about thinking how to deal with Abraham. Everybody waited.

Suddenly the king stopped pacing and laughed an ugly laugh. Then he whispered something to one of his soldiers. The soldier went out. The king waited and watched Abraham. Abraham waited and watched the king. But whatever the king was planning, Abraham was not afraid because he put all his trust in God.

The soldier came back with two men of the city. The two men were afraid for their lives and fell to the ground before the king. Abraham was afraid for the two men. Then the cruel king pointed to one of the men and said to his soldiers: 'That one! Kill that one!' The soldiers killed the man. Abraham felt sad and angry, but God gave him patience.

Then the king pointed to the other man and said to his soldiers: 'And now that one!' Then he suddenly said: 'No, let him live!'

Then the king turned to Abraham and said in a loud voice, so everyone in the palace could hear: 'You see, Abraham. I give life and death. I! I! I! I killed that man and I let that one live!'

Abraham was silent for just a moment. The king thought to himself: Now Abraham is afraid of me, now

he will bow down to me like the others, now he will stop his teaching. And he was so pleased with himself, he started to laugh his ugly laugh.

But Abraham was only silent because his heart was sad and heavy for the man killed by the king. He spoke out, and his voice was steady and angry. He said: 'God brings the sun from the east. Now you, you bring it from the west!'

The king did not laugh any more. He suddenly felt foolish, and he was foolish. Of course he could not bring the sun from the west and he knew it, and he knew that everybody knew it. He felt dumb, unable to move, unable to make a sound, just like a stone.

But the king wanted to show the people he was in control. So he went up to Abraham and tried to shout at him. But no sound came, only spluttering and hissing. He walked round and round Abraham, spluttering and hissing. But his noise and his anger no more harmed Abraham than the spluttering and hissing of the fire.

Abraham turned and walked away. His heart was heavy. He understood that he could not stay long in this city.

11
Abraham calls his father to God

Abraham wanted to call his father to God. He said to Azar:

'My father, why do you pray to things that cannot hear or see? Why do you pray to things that have no power to help you or harm you?

'My father, do not pray to these evil things. Pray instead to God alone, the Merciful.'

But Azar only became angry as before. He shouted at Abraham: 'Leave me alone, leave me alone. Just leave me alone. I'll beat you if you don't stop it!'

God gave Abraham patience, and he spoke gently to his father. He said: 'Peace be with you!' And then he said: 'I will leave this place and call on my Lord.'

Because Azar was angry with Abraham; because the people of the city were angry with Abraham; because the king of the city was angry with Abraham, Abraham moved to another land where he could pray to God in peace, and where he could call others to God in peace. He said good-bye to his city. He said good-bye to his father.

Abraham went with his wife, Sarah, and they travelled a long, long way to Palestine, and settled there.

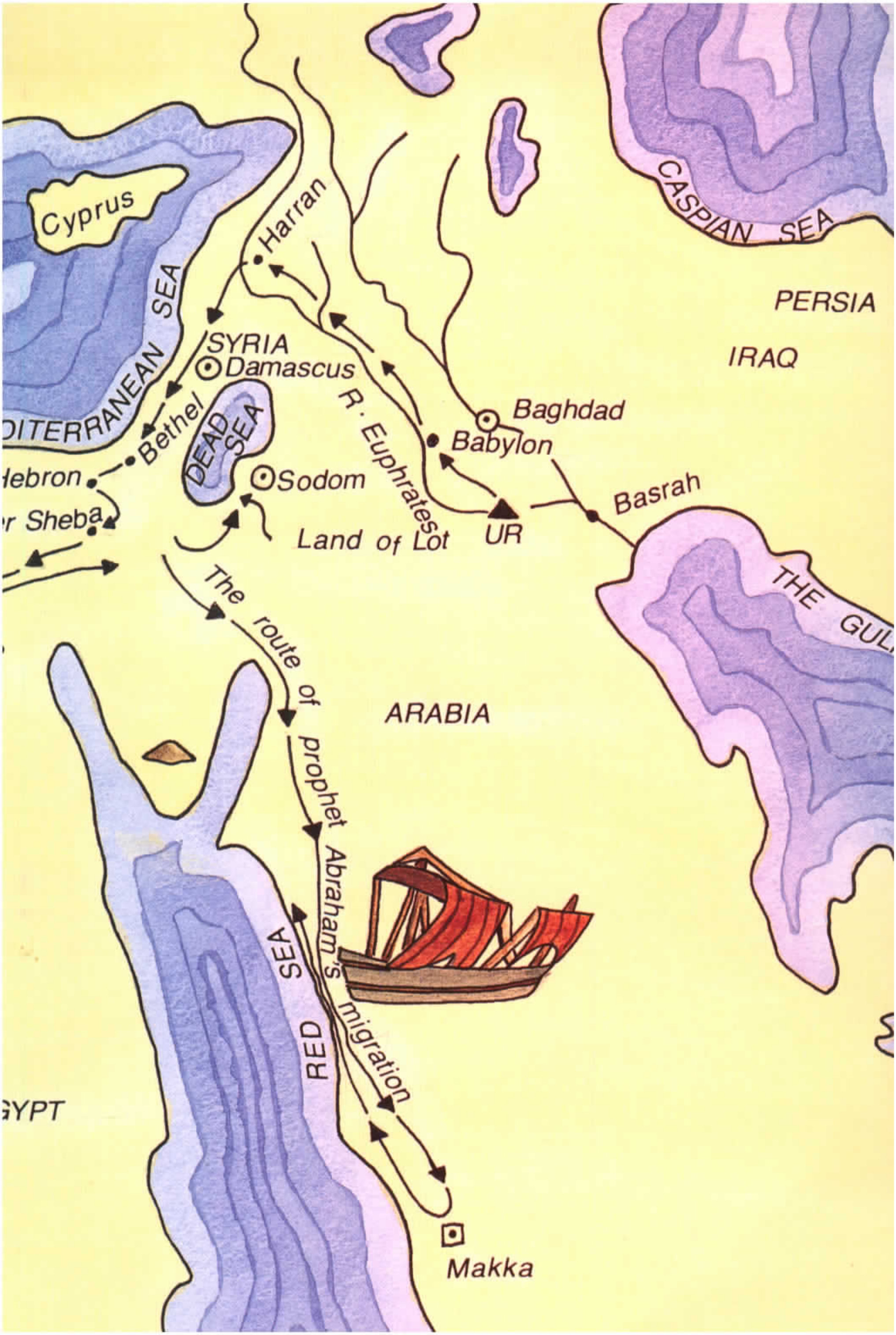
12
Abraham journeys to Makka

Abraham had no sons. He married a second wife, whose name was Hagar. God answered Abraham's need for a son, and though Abraham was old, God blessed him and Hagar with Ishmael. Abraham loved his son Ishmael and thanked God.

After a time, Abraham decided to settle with Hagar and Ishmael in a new land. They journeyed towards Makka in Arabia. At that time, there were no trees or plants in Makka. There were no animals living there, and there were no people. At that time, there was no well in Makka, no river, no water from anywhere. But Abraham put all his trust in God and stayed there as God willed, with his wife Hagar, and their son, Ishmael.

As God willed, Abraham made plans to go back to Palestine by himself. Hagar said: 'Will you leave us here alone without your protection, here where there is no food to be found and no water?'

Hagar did not panic or scream. She was not afraid because she put all her trust in God, as Abraham had told her to do. So she said: 'Has God ordered you to do this?'



Cyprus
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
CASPIAN SEA
PERSIA
IRAQ
Harran
SYRIA
Damascus
R. Euphrates
Baghdad
Babylon
Bethel
DEAD SEA
Hebron
Sodom
Basrah
Sheba
Land of Lot
UR
THE GUL
The route of prophet Abraham's migration
ARABIA
RED SEA
GYPT
Makka

'Yes,' said Abraham.

Hagar said: 'If God has ordered it, God will not let us die. God will help us. Let us do what God wills.'

So Abraham left Makka for a time, and Hagar and Ishmael stayed.

Abraham prayed to God to provide for his family. He prayed to God to help them so that they would thank Him. He prayed to God to give them strength and patience and true belief.

13
God sends His help and mercy

When the water ran out, and the heat was terrible, little Ishmael called to his mother for water. She wanted to give him water but there was not any. There was no well in Makka, there was no river in Makka. But Hagar put all her trust in God, so she looked for water. Hagar could see no sign of water, but she searched hard for it just the same. She ran as she searched. She ran in the terrible heat. She ran from Safa to Marwa and from Marwa to Safa. The running did not tire out her trust in God. The heat did not burn up her trust in God.

God helped Hagar and Ishmael. God created water for them. Water rushed out of the ground near them. How fine the sound of water is to those who are thirsty, it hums and sings, zzmm, zzmm! Ishmael drank the water and gave thanks to God; and Hagar drank the water and gave thanks to God. The water stayed in that place and became the well of Zamzam. It is known all the world over. God has blessed the well of Zamzam. God has blessed the water of Zamzam. Now Muslim pilgrims come from all over the world to Makka and they drink the water of Zamzam. When the pilgrims go home they take some of the water with them to share with others.



14
Abraham returns to Makka

After some time Abraham returned to Makka. He returned to Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham loved his son Ishmael, and they played together and worked together and went about together, and they were happy.

One night Abraham had a dream. It was a true dream because Abraham was a true Prophet. In this dream Abraham dreamed that he must sacrifice Ishmael. Now Abraham loved Ishmael, but the dream was an order from God. So Abraham told Ishmael his dream. He said: 'What is to be done?'

Ishmael did not panic or scream or run away. Because he put his trust in God he was not afraid. He said to Abraham:

'Father, do what the dream orders you to do. Do what God wills, because that is for the best. And if God wills, you will find me calm and steady.'

15
The day of sacrifice

So Abraham took Ishmael with him, trusting in God for the best. He took a knife with him to make the sacrifice. They went a distance and stopped at a place called Mina. Ishmael lay down on the ground, ready to do God's will. Abraham prepared the knife, and he brought the knife to Ishmael's throat, ready to do God's will.

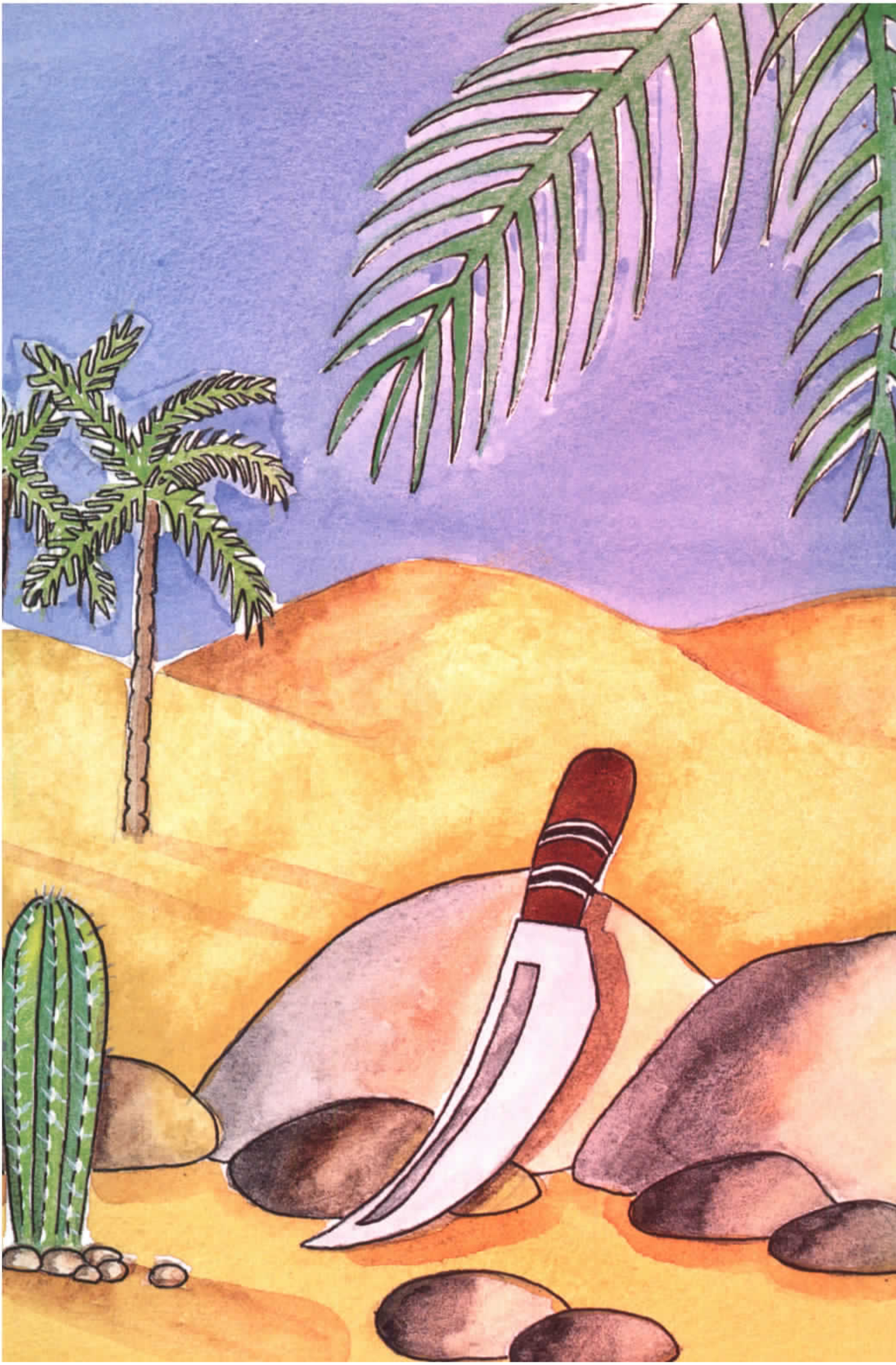
Did Abraham love God more, or did he now love Ishmael more? God wanted to remove any doubt in Abraham's heart about how much he trusted in Him. Also, God wanted to answer Abraham's prayer to make his family strong in their trust in God.

Now there was no doubt. Now Abraham had seen how perfect Ishmael's trust in God was. Now Abraham was sure in his heart that he loved God better than he loved Ishmael.

Straightaway God sent His angel, Gabriel, with a ram from the Garden. Gabriel said to Abraham:

'Abraham, stop! Do not sacrifice Ishmael. Sacrifice this ram.'

Abraham did so. God was satisfied with Abraham's great trust in Him. To help Muslims understand what such great trust means, God has ordered them to



remember that day always, and He has ordered them, if they can do so, to make a sacrifice on that day. That day is the great festival-day for Muslims all over the world, the great day of 'Id al-Adha.

God provides all living creatures with the best of things, and most especially He provides mankind with what is best for their souls. In this life there is for us light and air, and food and water, and there is some kindness and helpfulness amongst us for each other. God has made that possible so that we may be thankful to Him.

But we come to like what God has given us in this life so very much that we cannot bear to be parted from it. We cling to things instead of clinging to God who provides them. We cling to the people we love instead of clinging to God who created them and who created our love for them. Then, when what we love is taken from us, we find it hard to trust in God and believe it to be for the best.

So let Muslims remember in those moments the great trust of Abraham, and his great sacrifice. Let them remember, and say: 'May God bless Abraham, the close friend of God, and may God give peace to Abraham always.'

16
The building of the Ka‘ba

Abraham left Makka, and then returned again. He decided to build a house in God's name. Until then there was no house where people prayed only to God.

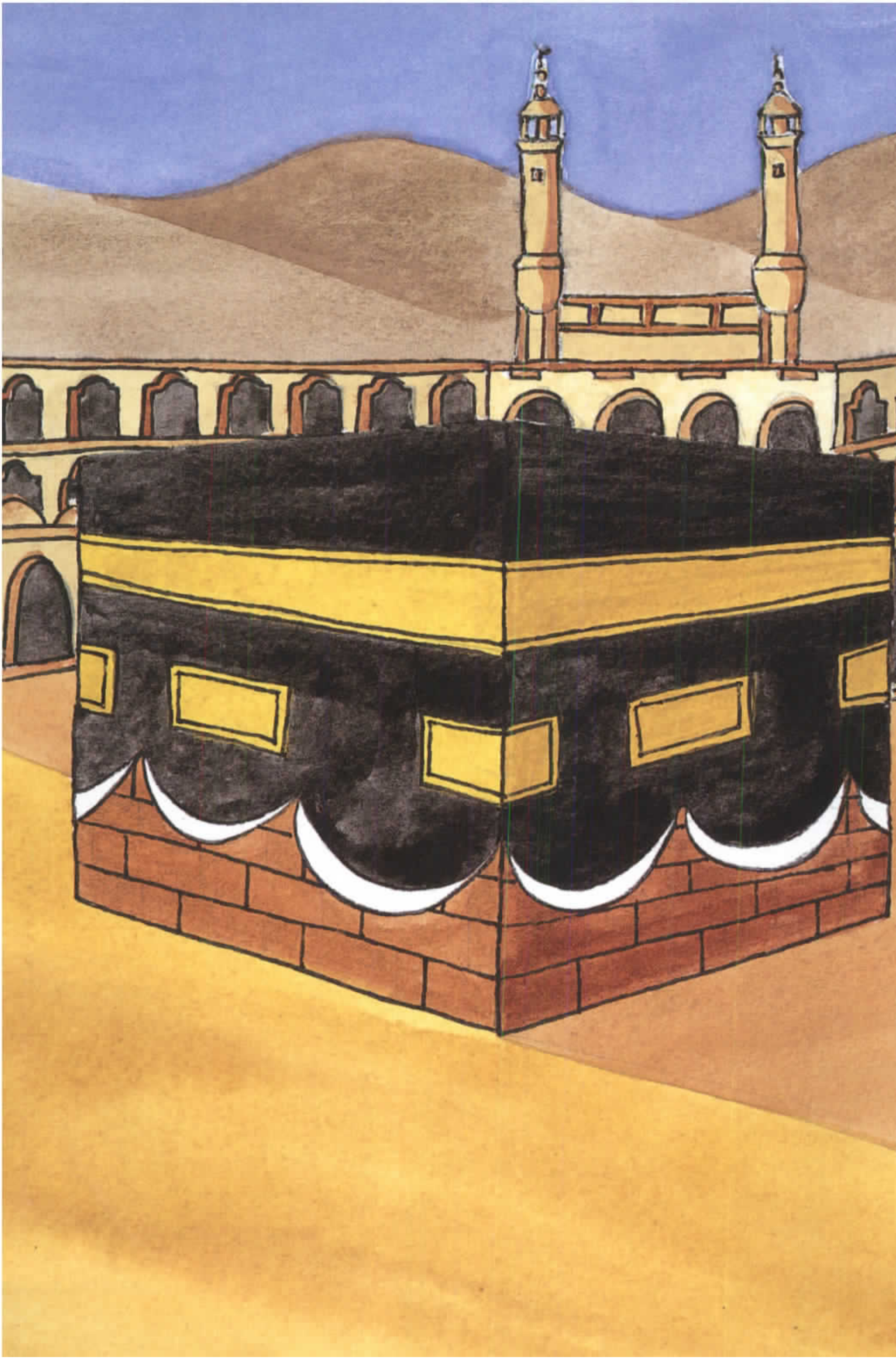
Ishmael wanted to help with the building of such a house. He went with Abraham into the mountains around Makka. With their own hands they carried stones from the mountains, all the way back to Makka. With their own hands they built the house in God's name. This house is called the Ka‘ba.

Abraham remembered God always and with all his heart. Abraham called on God always and with all his heart. He said:

'Our Lord, accept this house from us, built in Your name. All that can be seen, You see. All that can be heard, You hear.'

God accepted it. God accepted the hard work and deep trust of Abraham and Ishmael. God blessed the Ka‘ba.

Now, Muslims in all parts of the world turn to the Ka‘ba every time they pray. When they have a chance to make pilgrimage, they travel to the Ka‘ba. The



pilgrims go round the Ka'ba, and they pray there. The most famous of all the holy places on the earth is the Ka'ba. So Muslims say:

'May God bless Abraham and Ishmael who built the Ka'ba in God's Name, and may God give them peace always. And may God bless Muhammad, the last of the Prophets, who restored the Ka'ba in God's Name, and may God give him peace always.'

17
And remember Isaac

But we must remember there is another part of the story of Abraham which happened in Palestine.

Though Abraham was very old, and his wife Sarah was very old, God blessed them with a son, Isaac, just as he had blessed Abraham and Hagar with Ishmael. Isaac was also a true Prophet of God, and he built a house in God's Name in Palestine, just as Ishmael and Abraham had built the Ka'ba in Makka. This house is now the lovely mosque Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. God blessed it, and He blessed the land around it.

God blessed the sons of Isaac, just as He blessed the sons of Ishmael. There were Prophets and kings among them both. Now Isaac had a son whose name was Jacob, and Jacob was a Prophet. And Jacob had twelve sons. In the twelfth chapter of the Quran is written their story, and especially the story of one of them. It is called the most wonderful of stories. It tells of a dream that came true, and this dream was granted to the Prophet Joseph, the son of Jacob.